

**REPORT TO THE SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT
PARTNERSHIP JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

30 APRIL 2021

REPORT OF: Colin Huntington, Project Director, South Tyne and Wear Waste
Management Partnership

SUBJECT: Waste Management Plan for England

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the Joint Executive Committee following the publication of the Waste Management Plan for England (the Plan).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Published on 27 January 2021 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Plan's core aim - as specified in the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 - is to bring together all current waste management policies within a single, national document. The legislation dictates that the Plan must be updated every 6 years.

2.2 The Plan draws on a number of plans and strategies that are issued across a range of government departments, such as the:

- Clean Growth Strategy;
- Industrial Strategy;
- Litter Strategy;
- UK Plan for Shipments of Wastes;
- National Policy Statements for Hazardous Waste and for Renewable Energy Infrastructure; and
- Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS).

2.3 Therefore, the Plan highlights both existing policy and the possible changes in waste policy that are contained in the Environment Bill. This includes RaWS circular economy proposals such as: consistency in household and business recycling collections; the introduction of a deposit return scheme; and reforms to the UK packaging producer responsibility system (also known as extender producer responsibility).

3. WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ENGLAND - KEY ISSUES

3.1 The Plan does not contain any new requirements or policy changes. However, it does update government thinking on a number of key issues, including:

Energy-from-waste

3.2 Defra is seeking to increase the number of energy-from-waste (EfW) facilities which operate in combined heat and power (CHP) mode. Currently, only around one quarter of UK EfW plants provide CHP. Encouraging EfW facilities to produce heat for local networks will substantially reduce their emissions by utilising the otherwise wasted heat to displace gas boiler heating.

3.3 Therefore, Defra is supporting the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's £270 million Green Heat Network Fund scheme, which is expected to open in 2022.

Recycling

3.4 The Plan suggests that despite government action to support local authorities to improve the quantity and quality of recycling, material quality has not improved significantly with many local authorities continuing to provide comingled collections and are not, as recommended, separating glass from other materials.

3.5 Therefore, the as-yet still-awaited RaWS consultation on recycling consistency will clarify the separate collection requirements. This will be supported by statutory guidance which will set out the process by which waste collection authorities and other waste collectors may collect recyclable waste streams together.

3.6 The Plan also highlights the requirement for separate weekly food waste collections to be provided to all households in England. It notes that anaerobic digestion (AD) is the government's preference as the most effective way to treat food waste which, therefore, will need to be collected separately to kerbside garden waste collections.

3.7 However, the Plan states that government are still to consider the costs and benefits of free garden waste collections before making a final decision on whether they will be required, or whether garden waste charging should remain a matter for local decision making.

Extended Producer Responsibility

3.8 The Plan notes that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is 'an environmental policy approach through which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-use stage.' There are already UK-wide producer responsibility schemes in place for packaging waste; end-of-life vehicles; batteries and accumulators; and waste electrical and electronic equipment.

3.9 The RaWs sets out plans to review and reform these systems, with the latest consultation exercise including the principles that will be central to the revised EPR packaging scheme.

3.10 However, the Plan also confirms that Defra is currently considering five other waste streams where EPR could be introduced to improve waste management, i.e.:

- Textiles;
- Bulky waste;
- Certain materials in the construction and demolition sector;
- Vehicle tyres; and
- Fishing gear.

4. **ENVIRONMENT BILL - UPDATE**

4.1 However, separate to the publication of the Plan, government has also recently provided an update on the progress of the Environment Bill (the Bill) through parliament. This unexpected announcement highlighted that the Bill needed to be carried over to the 'next parliamentary session', with recycling minister Rebecca Pow confirming that the Bill's Royal Assent is now not expected until autumn 2021.

4.2 Government indicated that the delay is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in 'exceptional pressure on the parliamentary timetable which has reduced the amount of time available for the scrutiny of legislation.

4.3 However, Mrs Pow suggested that carrying the Bill over to the next parliamentary session did not diminish the government's environmental ambitions and that key work on implementing the Bill's measures will 'continue at pace'.

5. **CONCLUSIONS**

5.1 The government is legally obliged to update the Waste Management Plan for England every six years to ensure the provision of an up-to-date overview of waste management in England. This update does not outline any new regulations and its publication does not provide further clarification on the key decisions still outstanding from the RaWS proposals, e.g. the potential re-introduction of free garden waste collections.

5.2 Consequently, there are no immediate implications for local authorities arising from its publication.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The Joint Executive Committee is requested to:

- (i) Note the contents of this report.

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